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While drawing parallels with many other domestic themes explored in class, Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* provides a newer, more relevant twist, making the story more relatable for modern day readers. Set in the American 1980s, *White Noise* deals with the concepts of paranoia, conspiracy, mystery, the media, and domestic security. In the final section of reading, DeLillo further magnifies the characters’ conflict between their seemingly endless paranoia and their obliviousness when things do go wrong. Throughout his writing, DeLillo shows that even though natural disasters and personal turmoil may occur throughout the lives of his characters, they choose not leave the security of their self-constructed, idealistic lives and instead choose to live in a permanent state of denial.

Following the end of the Cold War, America was engulfed in a storm of conspiracy and paranoia, themes that are omnipresent in the lives of Jack Gladney and his family. A new story about threats to the American life were one every television, newspaper, and magazine. This constant threat of danger looming overhead would be enough to drive any community into a sense of panic and fear; however, the Gladney family and their neighbors do not respond in ways that would seem rational to most. The entire community stresses about emergencies and natural disasters to the point of creating the SIMUVAC system, in which they simulate and practice their plans of action in cases of various catastrophes. However, when real dangers are thrown their way (e.g. the Airborne Toxic event, or the noxious gas produced by a SIMUVAC simulation) they choose to simply ignore the problems. It is frustrating as a reader to see these characters so oblivious to the real dangers of their lives, and DeLillo constructs them in such a way as a means of getting a message across. During the time in which this novel was written, society was facing a dramatic cultural shift. Fleeting were the days of isolation and ignorance as technology prompted the rapid increase in globalization. The media and technological advancements allowed for the sharing of information at an unprecedented rate. And while these improvements have certainly contributed to the cultivation of a more cosmopolitan society, it also lent itself to the greater spread of fear. DeLillo illustrates this in his novel through his characters’ reactions to threats and shows that all of the advancements in relaying information are not necessarily good things. While being informed about the goings on of the world may seem like it would be beneficial in protecting oneself, *White Noise* shows overexposure to such news creates an unhealthy fear of the most minute and impossible circumstances. DeLillo shows that in the quest to understand all things, man makes himself a slave to the unknown.

The level of fear present in *White Noise* is also alarming because it desensitizes people from panic of what is truly dangerous. In an attempt to rid themselves of the supposed dangers put forth by the media, the Gladney family finds ways to numb and distract themselves. Jack himself turns to his studies of Hitler, a historical figure representative of dominance and control, and a way to divert his attention. Babette attempts to throw herself into the role of being a model housewife as a way to deal with both external pressures and internal conflicts. Even the children of the home are not immune to the traumatizing effects of the media. Prone to bouts of crying, panic, and cynicism, the Gladney children follow in their parents’ footsteps of poorly handling their environmental stresses. Even though it comes across to the reader that it is painfully apparent that this family is hiding behind superficial things as a way to cope with the collective strains of life, they are unable to see it is such a way. Ultimately, it is this inability to accept reality that pushes them to their darkest places.

It is plain to see that the Gladney clan lives in a perpetual state of denial. They spend all of their time concerning themselves with hypotheticals and things that don’t truly matter instead of focusing on things that are pertinent to their own lives. By creating whose central focus is on irrelevant things, DeLillo forces his audience to examine how the attitude of the family relates back to modern life. Consumerism continues to be an immovable part of American society, but all of the fluff and all of the hype of the media should not be the focus of life. DeLillo utilizes his characters in *White Noise* and a way of critiquing the emphasis that Americans place of material goods and superficial news, and forces readers to reexamine their own priorities in the grand scheme of life.